

## “Losing Sight” – Pr Jim Sprengle – Pentecost 15 September 21, 2025

- I. **Amos 8:4-7** – previously read
- II. **Amos lived more** than 700 years before Jesus, but his message is for today.
  - a. It’s so interesting how a group of people from 2700 years ago can struggle with the same issues we face in our contemporary lives.
  - b. Amos was called to preach against the breaking of God’s Ten Commandments...
    - i. I don’t envy him, as he was a simple farmer and shepherd, but called to travel into a hostile environment and show them that they were sinning against God’s Law.
    - ii. The people of Israel were essentially calling themselves Jewish in name, but in practice, they were acting just like the pagans that surrounded them.
      1. A common practice for the business community was to cheat customers by altering scales to give less product than owed.
      2. Also, wealthy people would take advantage of the debts of poor people and force them into becoming slaves as payment.
        - a. Even something as small as a pair of sandals could be used to enslave others (Amos 8:6)
      3. The poor and lowly were either ignored altogether, or they were taken advantage of in order to make more money.
      4. And they also ignored the Sabbath Day, or if they did observe some form of it, they were just wondering when it would be over so they could get back to making money.
  - c. All these things were breaking the Ten Commandments to make money or have a better life at the expense of others... and God.
    - i. Going back to Confirmation and learning about these commandments, they were breaking the First Commandment, “You shall have no other gods,” by trusting in wealth to save them.
    - ii. They broke the Third Commandment, “You shall remember the Sabbath Day by keeping it holy,” when they were more concerned about making money than giving credit to the God who provided everything they owned.
    - iii. They broke the Fifth Commandment, “You shall not murder,” when they pushed aside the poor and hurting, when they failed to protect their brothers and sisters from harm and danger.
    - iv. And they also broke the Seventh Commandment, “You shall not steal,” when they stole from customers, enslaved people over debts, and took advantage of their wealth to defraud others.
  - d. The commandments are directly from God – as it says in Exodus 31:18, “And [God] gave to Moses, when He had finished speaking with him on

Mount Sinai, the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God.”

- i. These commands were written in love for the people to walk in God’s ways rather than the standards of the world around them.
  - ii. The Ten Commandments are not God taking the fun out of our lives or about following the “rules” so we can get to heaven.
    1. The Ten Commandments are God’s loving instruction because He knows the sin and brokenness that flows out of not following Him – the pain and suffering that comes to us... and others.
    2. At the core of these instructions are the central tenets of our faith and lives, to love others and love God.
      - a. The central nature of these commands is to look outward rather than fulfill ourselves and our own needs.
- III. **Here we sit**, 2750 years after Amos said these words, and they still hit home.
- a. No, we might not have rigged scales at our business... and we may not be forcing people into indentured service to pay off debts... but we certainly struggle to walk in God’s ways.
  - b. God is telling us through Amos that He cares about the disenfranchised, the lowly, and those who have no means.
    - i. Jesus repeated these words over and over too, as He addressed the lack of justice as the poor and underprivileged were not given the same treatment.
    - ii. One way to interpret our parable today that seems to praise a man for being dishonest is that he released people from debts that may have enslaved them, which was using unrighteous wealth for good.
    - iii. The point of all this is to say that money and power tend to make us lose sight of the impoverished and how much they struggle.
      1. Maybe you’ve heard about the studies that show how expensive it is to live in low-income neighborhoods.
        - a. Without transportation, they often rely on expensive convenience stores to buy food... payday loan and rent-to-own companies prey on their needs with high interest rates (and so do credit card companies)... and many other challenges exist that keep people from getting ahead.
      2. For all the positives of capitalism and the entrepreneurial spirit, many people have unjustly gained from the least of these.
  - c. Again, maybe we don’t see ourselves taking part in stealing or defrauding, but what about trusting in money more than God as we break the First Commandment?
    - i. When we put our trust in an IRA or an inheritance to take care of us... or when we love money more than we love God – there’s a problem.

1. Sometimes our whole lives revolve around money and making more of it – no matter how rich or poor we are.
  - d. I really like how Amos gives us a visual of breaking the Third Commandment of honoring the Sabbath – as you can imagine an impatient businessman waiting for the rest day to be over so he can make money.
    - i. However, isn't that our expectation too?
    - ii. When Sundays used to be a day of rest for all businesses, today, we fully expect the stores to be open for us to shop when we get out of church.
    - iii. Maybe some of you are impatiently looking at your watches and wondering when church will be over – so you can get with the day ahead.
    - iv. And of course, businesses have to answer to stockholders and lenders... they are not going to close for an entire day of profits.
      1. And why is it profitable? Because we go there on Sundays!
  - e. Finally, the neglect of the poor, the lack of care for the needs of others is breaking the Fifth Commandment – “You shall not murder.”
    - i. As the Small Catechism says, “We should fear and love God so that we do not hurt or harm our neighbor in his body, but help and support him in every physical need.”<sup>1</sup>
    - ii. The heart of the Fifth Commandment is more than forbidding the actual murder of another, but keeping this commandment in the world around us includes protecting others and helping others in their need.
    - iii. It's overwhelming to think about all the needs we have around us, but God calls us to look outward in our own circle of influence –
      1. Is someone in need of an advocate? Of financial support? Of food? Of companionship? Of protection?
      2. When God shows us the place we can keep the Fifth Commandment, we pray for the courage to carry out whatever it takes.
  - f. All of the issues that Amos called out the Israelites for were things we deal with today – and the hypocrisy of seeing ourselves as followers of God, yet living just like the unbelievers around us.
  - g. God never wants us to lose sight of the heart of His commands, to love Him with all our heart, mind, and soul, and love our neighbor as we love ourselves.
  - h. As we reflect on the places we fall short of God's will – we are reminded of the steadfast love that God has always shown His people – even today.
- IV. **One of the great mysteries is our sins were met with sacrifice.**
- a. When we often live unjustly and overlooking the lowly, Jesus was unjustly condemned to redeem the lowly.
  - b. When we fail to worship our God and rest in His Word, Jesus spent the Sabbath Day in a tomb.

- c. As we trust in creation rather than the Creator, Jesus trusted in the Father unto death so we could be saved.
- d. Even when we lose sight of God's commands, God never loses sight of us, because His gaze is always filled with mercy and love in Christ.
- e. So, take this home: in Jesus, we are God's chosen people, covered by His grace as we fix our eyes on Him and open our eyes to those around us.

<sup>1</sup>Luther. (2017). Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation (p. 85). Concordia Publishing House.